



## CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY

The EC4 kicked off the development of the Climate Action Strategy this January with facilitator presentations and stakeholder feedback. Read more on page 2.

## EC4 UPDATE

The EC4 and the EC4 Advisory Board convened several times, covering the 2022 GHG Emissions Portfolio, the Advisory Board Outreach Initiative, and more. Read more on page 3.

## EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group met in January to discuss community outreach and public education initiatives. Read more on page 5.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EBC** Innovation in Decarb Webinar - 2/25

**NESEA** Building Energy Boston - 3/20 to 3/21

**NEEP** Decarbonizing Communities 2025 - 4/9

**RIBA** Rhode Island Home Show - 4/10 to 4/13

## MEETINGS COVERED

EC4 Advisory Board - 12/9 & 1/29

EC4 - 12/11 & 2/10

EC4 Climate Action Strategy Kickoff - 1/9

EE TWG - 1/23

Draft Building Decarbonization Report Listening Session - 1/27

EE EWG - 1/27

# SPOTLIGHT

## **BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AWARDED HOME ENERGY REBATE MONEY TO PA., DEL., N.J. IN FINAL DAYS**

In its final days, the Biden administration approved federal funding for home energy rebate programs in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey, allocating \$260 million, \$183 million, and \$66 million respectively. These programs aim to help households afford energy-efficient appliances and home improvements, such as electric heat pumps and insulation, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, lower energy bills, and improve health and comfort. The programs are set to roll out this year, with a focus on benefiting low- to moderate-income households, though effective outreach and user-friendly applications are crucial for equitable access.



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## **EC4 CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY KICKOFF**

The Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) held the highly attended RI Climate Strategy Kickoff Meeting on January 9, with roughly 170 participants. Terry Gray, Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and Chairman of the EC4, explained that the goals of the Climate Strategy are to map out Rhode Island's path to achieving its 2030 targets and to set the stage for the 2040 and 2050 commitments. Energy + Environmental Economics Inc. (E3), the lead consultants for the development of the Climate Action Strategy (CAS), presented policy and project summaries including background information, policy

motivation, project goals, and key deliverables. Participants provided a variety of feedback including calls for the inclusion of the economics of climate change, embedded equity and environmental justice in all aspects of the CAS representative stakeholders, grid and market impacts, and more throughout the entirety of the planning process. BW Consulting described how they will combine E3's models, secondary research, workforce surveys, and stakeholder interviews to model workforce impacts. The participants broke out into small groups to discuss the six proposed focus areas for engagement: Workforce, Environmental Justice & the Equitable Transition, Energy, Transportation, Municipalities, and Buildings. The common themes among participant feedback were that there were too few focus areas, and there were missing topics that deserved their own focus area. Suggested topics included ecosystem services, land use, environmental tradeoffs, and business owners – as a separate group from workers. As a collective, the participants valued environmental justice, equity, workforce impacts, and education the highest out of the existing focus areas.

## **Trump Administration's Funding Freeze Jeopardizes Key Environmental Justice Efforts**

The Trump Administration's recent federal funding freeze has halted energy and resilience projects across the U.S. and its territories. Acting Energy Secretary Ingrid Kolb issued a memo suspending work on projects involving Community Benefit Plans and Justice40 requirements, impacting existing contracts and grants. This freeze affects various entities, including cities, states, and territories, leading to significant disruptions. Closer to home, the RI Office of Energy Resources (OER) has been unable to access \$125 million in federal funds for renewable energy and energy efficiency incentives. The following programs have been impacted so far: the Solar for All Grant Program, the Home Electrification & Appliance Rebate Program, the National Vehicle Electrification Initiative, the Home Energy Rebate Program, the Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Program, the Multi-State Heat Pump Program, and several others. The full extent of the freeze's impact remains unclear, and legal challenges from affected entities and advocacy groups are ongoing. The freeze has created mass confusion and uncertainty among project recipients, who are unsure when and how they'll be able to proceed with their planned initiatives.

The EC4 Advisory Board met on December 9, 2024. Advisory Board members shared news from their respective agencies. The OER and the Renewable Energy Fund co-launched the Microgrids for Critical Services Program which is receiving applications on a rolling basis. RIDEM is preparing for the CAS by considering how to best approach engagement and outreach. Additionally, RIDEM is considering whether to merge health equity zones, environmental justice areas, and green justice zones, to streamline efforts to targeted communities since there is significant overlap. Additionally, an advisory board member said that six groups have received Climate Engagement Grants so far, including Roots2Empower, Youth in Action, and Agriculture Alliance.

The EC4 convened on December 11, 2024. The meeting featured a presentation from RIDEM's Office of Air Resources (OAR) on the 2022 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory. **The total emissions for the State in 2022 were 9.6 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, representing an 18.3% decrease in net GHG emissions from the 1990 baseline levels.** The transportation sector made up the largest portion of the 2022 Inventory, followed by residential buildings and electricity consumption. Notably, emissions from electricity consumption have decreased 1.2% since 2021 and 31.7% since 1990. **This can likely be attributed to advances in energy efficiency, weatherization, and the electrification of heating via heat pumps.** Additionally, renewable energy provided 19.3% of the energy supply in the State in 2022. The EC4 asked how RI compares to other states. The OAR responded that RI was the first New England state to publish an inventory for 2022, but unofficial data shows that RI was the only state in the region to see emissions decrease in 2022. The EC4 was concerned about data availability with the incoming administration. The OAR said they've been working with the US Climate Alliance to store historical datasets in case they are lost. The OAR also noted that the EPA had communicated its GHG reporting tools and programs fall under regulations that may be cut. The OAR stressed the importance of building a state data library in preparation for potential EPA cuts.

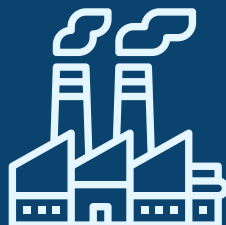
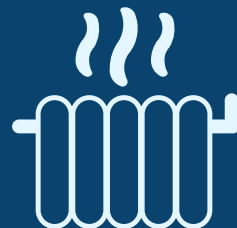
The EC4 Advisory Board met again on January 29. The bulk of the meeting was spent discussing the Advisory Board's scope of work for their targeted outreach initiative. The Advisory Board adapted some of the language to emphasize public education in addition to gathering feedback. The members also established that the proposal would target a range of communities with different climate needs and will

## R | greenhouse gas EMISSIONS PORTFOLIO



**37%**  
TRANSPORTATION

**21%**  
RESIDENTIAL  
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**21%**  
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involve climate conversations that will be open to the public. The Advisory Board discussed upcoming legislation including the Decarbonization Bill and the Clean Heat Standard. Finally, an Advisory Board member announced that the RI Food Policy Council had received an \$18 million dollar Grant for Waste Reduction & Compost from the EPA.

The EC4 met again on February 10. Chair Gray opened the meeting with a discussion of potential funding implications given the current volatility of federal funding. The EC4 maintains the development of the Climate Action Strategy as its top priority, which is currently funded by the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG). The EC4 approved a contingent reallocation of \$225,000 from RIDEM to the Climate Strategy if the CPRG is jeopardized by federal funding freezes. Chair Gray also stated that RI is an active participant of the US Climate Alliance and will continue to discuss business, economic, and environmental opportunities and strategies to address climate change with its 20+ other member states. Next, the OER presented on building benchmarking and BPS. The EC4 approved the submittal of the Building Decarbonization Report to the RI General Assembly. Representatives from the EC4 Advisory Board stated that allowing for EC4

Advisory Board and STAB review before submittal would amplify public engagement and result in a stronger Report overall. The Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) presented on the [2024 Resilient Rhody Report and next steps for climate resilience in 2025](#). The CRO explained that the goal of the Report is to “provide a snapshot of RI’s current resilience status” and “provide a snapshot of state progress towards the 61 goals outlined in the 2018 Resilient Rhody Report.” Chair Gray noted that the 2025 Statewide Coastal Resilience Plan and the Climate Action Strategy are currently on the same timeline, so funding for both is in the process of being finalized. Members of the public emphasized the importance of stakeholder review on all draft reports and plans during the public comment period. Additionally, several members of the public raised concerns regarding the benchmarking and BPS rollout, stating that the timeline was not nearly aggressive enough to achieve sufficient building decarbonization and meet the Act on Climate mandates.

## Draft Building Decarbonization Report Listening Session



The RI General Assembly passed a joint resolution [H-7617A](#) in June of 2024 requesting that the EC4, the OER, and the Department of Administration prepare a report identifying the potential role of benchmarking and building performance standards (BPS) for large existing buildings in achieving Act on Climate decarbonization goals. The EC4 held a listening session for the Draft Report on January 27.

The EC4 was tasked with recommending strategies and implementation plans to evaluate the following:

- 1. Building sector emissions** and data on the emissions and EUI of large buildings
- 2. Inventory of covered properties**, including building type and size
- 3. Summary of large buildings’ energy sources**
- 4. Compliance costs** for expected retrofits, alterations, and repairs,
- 5. Relevant state agencies** for implementation,
- 6. Estimated staff, budget, and resources**
- 7. Recommended timelines** for establishment and implementation

Stakeholders provided feedback on the presentation. One stakeholder asked if the plans considered that Providence was already in the process of developing a BPS for its public buildings, and 70% of large buildings would fall within its



jurisdiction. Several participants felt that there was a gap in the analysis regarding potential grid savings and avoided costs under a BPS. Many stakeholders requested that the Draft Report be shared with stakeholders in advance of its submittal for written feedback. Finally, a participant encouraged the EC4 and the OER to assess the feasibility of a BPS and benchmarking review board, similar to that of Boston, if they pursue fines for non-compliance. He explained that the board is made up of elected community members and has the power to decide how funding from fines is allocated; it is also at the board's discretion to grant extensions and flexibility in building compliance plans.

## A Review of Energy Efficiency Progress in the Northeast in 2024

The Northeast region achieved significant progress in energy efficiency in 2024, with states like Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut launching major annual and multi-year plans focused on energy affordability, achieving climate goals, workforce development, and energy justice. These plans include substantial investments in energy efficiency, decarbonization, and energy equity, such as New Jersey’s \$3.8 billion plan and Massachusetts’ nearly \$5 billion proposal. The region also leveraged federal funding for state and community-level efficiency programs, including the New England Heat Pump Accelerator, aimed at increasing the adoption of efficient heat pumps. Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP) brought together states to explore opportunities like the Department of Energy’s Home Energy Rebates program, which is managed by state energy offices. Rhode Island, New York, Maine, and Washington D.C. have already initiated these programs. Additionally, workforce development initiatives were expanded to support the growing number of energy efficiency jobs, addressing workforce gaps and contractor needs. Despite challenges like rising electricity prices and federal funding uncertainties, the region’s leadership in energy efficiency remains crucial for meeting ambitious climate and affordability goals.



## Northeast States urged to consider climate change superfund acts

The Climate Change Superfund Act, recently adopted in New York, mandates that the largest fossil fuel companies pay \$3 billion annually for 25 years to compensate for pollution since 2000. This funding will be used to repair climate-related damage, enhance infrastructure resilience, and address public health issues like asthma. Advocacy groups such as Third Act and Fridays for Future NYC have encouraged nearby states to consider implementing similar legislation. Despite opposition from conservative groups and oil companies, the law represents a significant step towards holding polluters accountable and reducing the financial burden on consumers. The act does not reduce greenhouse gases but aims to address past harms caused by fossil fuel emissions, making it a crucial measure for climate justice and environmental protection. In Rhode Island, the Climate Superfund Act of 2025, [HB 5424](#), has been introduced in the House to “[establish] the Rhode Island Climate Superfund Act cost recovery program.”



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## RHODE ISLAND ENERGY EFFICIENCY EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) met on January 27 to discuss community outreach and education. The meeting began with three member spotlights: Kate Felder – RIE Community Outreach, Flavia Tilett – weatherization participant and landlord, and Annie Foley – weatherization participant and renter. Felder described upcoming outreach and marketing efforts for 2025, including two landlord sessions per month at public libraries within the five equity areas. Each weatherization participant described their individual experiences with RISE and the Home Energy Audit (HEA) process. Generally, they both gave very positive feedback, stating that the RISE staff were extremely professional, kind, communicative, timely, etc. The group then engaged in a discussion surrounding outreach and education best practices, strategies, digital tools, and additional feedback.

Finally, Margie Lynch, a member of the EEC’s Consultant Team, presented an overview of the Community First Partnerships (CFPs) in Massachusetts. Lynch described energy advocates, CFP program support, CFP activities, and MA Community Education Grants. Lynch said that the CFPs have been integral in accomplishing Massachusetts’s ambitious equity goals. When asked which actions could be mirrored in RI to improve service to underserved communities, Lynch replied that more funds could be made available to each equity community, and more communities could be supported. The next EE Equity Working Group meeting will be on February 24.



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY Technical Working Group

The Energy Efficiency Technical Working Group (TWG) convened on January 23. Rhode Island Energy (RIE) presented a summary of the PUC Docket outcomes in December. The OER expressed that they were open to follow up sessions for collaboration among RIE and OER programs, as encouraged by the PUC. Other TWG members discussed the possibility of shifting to a three-year planning cycle. Two members said that the Least Cost Procurement standard should be updated this year to support the potential development of a 2027-2029 Three-Year Plan in 2026. Next, RIE shared that they are working on the 2026 Planning timeline, and it should be similar to last year. Finally, the TWG discussed potential TWG meeting topics for 2025 and collaboration with the EEC. The TWG members agreed that the EEC meetings cover high-level discussion, while the TWG meetings are reserved for in-depth discussions on singular topics. A TWG member also raised the possibility of bringing back the opportunity for the TWG to sign onto future Energy Efficiency Plans to show their support.